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AUTHOR Tardif, Claudette; Weber, Sandra
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ABSTRACT

A study of the child's experience in learning a second language as it is embedded in his experience of kindergarten looks at two classes of unilingual (English-speaking) Canadian children in a half-day French immersion program. The immersion experience for the children is described in these terms: what "French" means to them; what and how they understand what the teacher says and does, how they react; what aspects of classroom life are relevant to understanding second language acquisition; and what attitudes and concepts concerning language, culture, and learning are reflected in the children's language and play. Data were gathered by extensive classroom observation, audio- and video-recordings, teacher notes, and semi-structured and open-ended interviews of parents and students. The parents and teachers were more challenged than the children by the second language, and the children treated their inability to understand the teacher's language as a minor barrier. The children attended to both the linguistic and paralinguistic factors in the school and childhood cultures. The data will be quantified and examined further for insights into classroom interaction and second language acquisition processes in this context. (MSE)

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THE YOUNG CHILD'S EXPERIENCE OF FRENCH IMMERSION SCHOOLING

CLAUDETTE TARDIF
SANDRA WEBER

University of Alberta

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THE YOUNG CHILD'S EXPERIENCE OF FRENCH IMMERSION SCHOOLING

Claudette Tardif and Sandra Weber
Faculté Saint-Jean
The University of Alberta

This paper reports on some of the preliminary findings of an on-going field-based study that focuses on the child's experience of a second language as it is embedded in the experience of kindergarten. The following questions provide an underlying orientation to the study: What is the experience of French immersion like for children? What does "French" mean to them? What (and how) do the children understand of what the teacher says and does and how do they react? What aspects of classroom life are relevant to understanding second language acquisition and how are they relevant? What attitudes and concepts concerning language, culture and learning are reflected in the child's language and play?

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

The methodological framework for this research stems from the ethnographic and phenomenological traditions of grounded-theory in educational research as articulated or exemplified by such researchers as Tough (1977), Edwards and

Furlong (1978), Barritt (1984), Spindler (1982), and Delamont (1983). The focus of these approaches is on describing and understanding experience in context, and on discerning the meaning of situations to the people living them. Accordingly, we selected research procedures that help researchers to become intimately familiar with the setting in which the children and the teacher interact, to situate the meanings children attach to their experiences, and to capture these exeriences as they unfold. In keeping with our ethnographic and phenomenological orientations, the emphasis is on thick description, on process, on meaning structures and on the natural setting as the source of data.

Two groups (classes) of unilingual English-speaking Canadian children enrolled in a half-day total French immersion program were followed on a continuous basis throughout an entire kindergarten year (1985-86), and subsequently on an intermittent basis the following year in grade one. The two groups of children were taught by the same teacher in kindergarten and in grade one. The teacher spoke to the children exclusively in French for over ninety per cent of the school day. In addition, other French immersion kindergarten classrooms and a regular English (first language) kindergarten are being occasionally observed and video-recorded in order to provide additional insight and perspective for the interpretation of our research.

We are using a variety of instruments and data-gathering techniques: extensive classroom observations, field notes,

audio and video-recordings, note-keeping by the teacher, and both semi-structured and open-ended interviewing of parents and children, including interviews with the children that incorporate the use of a puppet. The researchers independently and occasionally jointly observed each group of children two days a week during strategically selected blocks of four-six weeks interpersed throughout the 1985-86 school year (Sept.-mid-Oct.; mid-Nov.-mid-Dec; Feb.; April-May).

The observers and a videocamera were present in the classroom on the very first day of school in order to witness the children's initial contact with immersion schooling. Thereafter, the videocamera was in each class once a week from the beginning of September until the end of April, providing a continuous record even when the researchers were not there. The evolution of the children's understanding of their French kindergarten situation seemed to demand an almost daily chronicling to capture the very rapid changes that occurred, especially during the first two months of school. The videotapes have proven to be of particular methodological significance, providing pertinent information on social context, shared meanings, and the paralanguage dimensions (Pennycook, 1985) of sense-making.

The use of a puppet during some of the interviews with the children is proving invaluable, encouraging the children to express their views of their school experience. Because the puppet is introduced as a shy three-year-old who doesn't even

know what kindergarten is about, the children are more forthcoming with detailed explanations than they usually are with adults.

In order to provide a wider context for interpreting the children's behaviour and attitudes, a questionnaire was given to all the parents, and follow-up interviews were held with a representative sample. Throughout two years, the classroom teacher has been acting as a research participant, keeping a journal and participating in the collection, analysis and discussion of the data. The use of three observers (including the teacher) assures an exchange of viewpoints and a more complete observation, providing one of the methodological advantages of the project.

In keeping with ethnographic and phenomenological research strategy, we did not go into the classroom with pre-conceived categories for observation or with rigidly defined data collection procedures, but rather adapted and refined our procedures as new questions emerged in the light of the data already collected. As an example, we had initially centered our classroom observations on the teacher-directed "circle time" and on the children's subsequent spontaneous interaction in the various play centers. As our knowledge of the situation grew, we realized the additional importance of observing the children as they got dressed to go outside and whenever they lined up to go anywhere in the school. These were moments when the children commented freely on their perceptions and understanding of their

experience. As well, it soon became evident that what the children did was often related to the teacher's behavior and vice versa. Any attempt to describe and interpret the experience of French immersion necessitates a careful examination of the potential determinants of meaning and of the sense-making strategies utilized by each of the participants in the communicative process.

A preliminary analysis and interpretation of a portion of the data is now complete. The majority of the video and audio tapes have been transcribed and selected samples have been analysed. The process of analysing and interpreting the data will eventually include detailed descriptions of "key incidents" (Erickson, 1977), category saturation and cross-checking (Turner, 1981), discourse analysis (Halliday, 1975 ; Tough, 1977), phenomenological analysis (Barritt, 1984; van Manen, 1984), and consultation of the pertinent work of other scholars.

FINDINGS

There are many determinants which give meaning and structure to the child's experience of French immersion kindergarten. This paper will report on 1) the primacy of school culture as a major determinant of meaning in structuring the child's experience of kindergarten and in influencing the routines, rituals and the nature of communication in immersion classrooms, and 2) the child's perspective of French immersion

schooling.

I. THE PRIMACY OF CULTURE IN CLASSROOM LIFE

The primacy of the cultural aspects of life in schools is readily observed in the teacher's attempts to organize classroom life and in the children's reactions to those attempts. By "culture", we refer to both a) shared patterns of beliefs and knowledge by which people order their perceptions and experiences and in terms of which they act, and b) customary patterns and organization of behaviours and symbolic manifestations or expressions of these patterns. A theme analyis of our observation notes and of the transcripts of classroom interaction reveals three layers or categories of culture that seem important to understanding immersion kindergartens. Ordered from the more general to the specific, these categories are: A) the culture of childhood, B) the culture of schooling, and C) the culture of French immersion kindergarten teaching.

A. THE CULTURE OF CHILDHOOD

One of the ways in which the children and teacher succeed in their collective negotiation of meaning (Wells, 1979) is by drawing on shared elements of the culture of childhood. Thus, for example, the teacher will draw on the children's prior

experience and knowledge of such universal children's games as hide-and-seek or peek-a-boo to introduce French vocabulary. Similarly, the teacher will often read French fairy tales already familiar to most children in English, superimposing new words on the cognitive maps the children bring to the situation. The children respond actively, questioning and guessing and using all their prior knowledge to make sense of this second language experience. When the teacher asks in French "What is going to happen next?" before turning the page, the children are readily able to respond and hypothesize, secure because they know that they already know, delighted in being able to participate competently in this group experience. In a similar fashion, many of the songs used at the beginning of the year in immersion kindergartens have L2 words set to melodies from other L1 songs already familiar to the children. The children thus do not have to concentrate on learning the melody and they delight in recognizing the tunes as familiar friends.

In North American society, the cultural artifacts of childhood include a vast array of consumer fads, toys that are so widely distributed and advertised that almost all children have them or know about them - a constant and changing parade of Transformers, Cabbage Patch dolls, He-Men, Wrinkle Pets, etc. The children inevitably bring these cultural artifacts to school, often for "show and tell". These shared symbols help create a we-ness or cohesiveness as the children try to initiate conversations about them. The teacher may use the occasion to

speak in French about something in which the children are interested, asking the children questions in French about their favorite toys, etc. Increasingly linked with consumer products and toys, the pervasive influence of television (Postman, 1982) among all social classes and the widespread availability of such programs as Sesame Street and the Saturday morning cartoon shows provide a similar shared core of experience that both children and teachers bring to the classroom. Yet another aspect of childhood culture is reflected in the choice of play centers so common to all kindergartens and daycares: the old familiar sandbox, the block corner, the lego toys, the dress-up corner, the dollhouse, the plasticine, the crayons, etc. These centers reflect many of the things children do in our society and ways in which they are expected to learn to play together. Once more, the transition between the familiar world of early childhood and the strange environment of school and a second language is made a little easier because of the incorporation of the familiar in the strange.

Certain holidays such as Halloween and Christmas figure prominently in the North American culture of childhood, especially for children from middle and upper socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, the ritual of dressing up in a costume and going out trick or treating is a signpost for many children, it means they are "big enough to go out on Halloween". Teachers make much of the familiar holidays, bringing in the symbols associated with these occasions and clarifying and

extending their meaning in French. But there are also holidays celebrated in French immersion classrooms that are not known by many of the children, holidays that are specific to the culture of childhood in the second language but not the first. The children's reactions, for example, to the teacher's attempts to explain either the French Canadian festivals of "La fête de la Sainte Catherine" or "Le Carnaval du Québec" are very different from the familiar and easy way they understand Valentine's Day or Easter celebrations. The contrast between the children's reactions to familiar and unfamiliar holidays highlights the importance of the L1 culture of childhood to the construction and organization of meaning within the classroom by both teachers and children.

B. THE CULTURE OF SCHOOLING

Analysis of the data reveal that although extensibly and consciously the teacher often focused on the teaching of French vocabulary and phrases, for the children, the meaning of much of the activity of the first weeks of immersion kindergarten centered on adapting to the peculiar characteristics of school life:

--1) getting used to the school-specific organization of people:
- e.g. lining up, sitting in a circle, doing things in large groups and in small groups, choosing partners, girls as a distinct group from boys, how to choose a play center;

--2) adapting to organization of physical space and new materials: - e.g. how story corner works, the playground, going to the washrooms, how to put the blocks away, how to use the centers, where to go;

--3) internalizing the time structure of school: - e.g. the concept of recess (going outside but not going home, you have to come back inside the classroom); the sequence of school-specific activites - first we do the calendar routine, then we do the weather routine, then we sing - a dividing up of the day into a familiar pattern of time blocks, each block symbolized or announced by a specific song or phrase or gesture;

--4) learning the interaction rules and power relations of school: - e.g. not to talk while teacher is talking, look at teacher for directives on what to do, ask permisssion to go to the bathroom, wait for your turn to do things, learn to read subtle clues concerning when it seems alright to comment aloud in the group context, etc.

The major, although perhaps "hidden" curriculum of French immersion kindergarten is learning how to behave in school, learning what school is about. Our observations in the English kindergarten (which was similar in many respects to the immersion kindergartens), lead us to hypothesize that immersion kindergartens are not very different from other classrooms. As Goodlad (1984) has asserted in his study of over 1000 American classrooms, despite much rhetoric to the contrary, in most

elementary classrooms, it is still the teacher who does all the talking, and the focus is still very much on regulating student behaviour. As Edwards and Furlong (1978) point out, the organization of classroom talk is inseparable from the management of classroom meaning in a context set up primarily for "the control of knowledge by the patterning of communication" (p.11).

C. THE CULTURE OF FRENCH IMMERSION KINDERGARTEN

Most kindergarten contexts, immersion and otherwise, include structured circle time, play centers, dress up corners, fine motor tasks, art activities, logic games, problem solving situations, music, and movement activities. This context provides opportunities for children to explore, to initiate, to act on their environment, and to develop through concrete experiences. The French immersion kindergarten while in many ways very similar to English first language kindergartens has its own distinctive features which provide a background for the interpretation and negotiation of meaning. As a result of not being able to rely solely on linguistic cues in order to communicate with children, immersion teachers become particularly attentive to communicative strategies other than language which permit them to provide meaning to a situation. The child learns to make sense of the linguistic stimuli impinging upon him by experiencing the situation in very

concrete ways simultaneously with the presentation of the spoken word. Language thus becomes mapped on the child's understanding of the situation, although not necessarily in a word by word fashion.

The daily songs sung in every French immersion kindergarten illustrate how sound, rhythm, and gestures are often the initial focus for the children and how their initial sense-making strategies center on, "what does Teacher want me to do?" Songs appear to play a very important role as signals or cues, marking off neatly the end of one activity and the beginning of another, carving up the day into familiar sequences of time and function. In a sense, the songs seem to say to the children (mean to the children): "stop this", or "come here", or "now it's time for _____". Although some of the songs are adaptations of French words to English melodies, many of the songs have a French origin, for example "Frère Jacques", "Sur le pont d'Avignon", "Au Clair de la lune", and become part of the culture of the French immersion kindergarten. The use of songs and rhymes in kindergarten draws on the child's natural desire to play with sounds, to imitate, to repeat, to move in rhythmic patterns. Most of the songs have accompanying body movement, indicating that singing is very much a holistic experience. By focusing attention on listening comprehension skills, on repetition of sounds as part of a group experience, and on body movement, songs have become ensconced in the culture of immersion kindergartens and provide a good example of an excellent

pedagogical strategy for second language acquisition and for second language teaching.

ROUTINES, RITUALS AND PATTERNS OF MEANING

Together and individually, the teacher and the children attribute meanings to the kindergarten experience, meanings that are constructed within a context of shared perceptions, reciprocal activities, rituals, and routine social patterns. Children quickly learn the participation structures of characteristic activities in the classroom (Erickson and Shultz, 1977). Events in the classroom soon come to have a predictable order and sequence.

What the children seem to be learning during circle time with the teacher are mainly routines; that is, they are learning to anticipate a certain sequence and order of activities and a certain sequence of interaction patterns between teacher and child. At the beginning, the children watch the teacher and each other attentively, carefully imitating and gradually finding pleasure in their ability to participate in these rituals. Throughout the kindergarten year (but much less so in grade one), French is thus largely associated (for the children) with rituals, routines, and with particular songs. The "Bonjour" ritual, for example, is the first thing the children do in every French immersion kindergarten the authors have visited. With much motioning of the hands, or pointing to a

taped circle on the carpet, the teacher manages (speaking in French without a word of English) to make the children understand they are to sit in a circle around her. Then after relying on such things as the well-understood "Shh" with hands to lips to quiet the children, the teacher begins the bonjour song, "Bonjour, les amis, bonjour", to be replaced later on in the year with "Bonjour, bonjour, comment "ça va?" These same songs are sung in countless classrooms across Canada, part of the undocumented culture of immersion kindergartens. Next, the teacher points to herself and says her name and then says bonjour to each child by name. She then makes a small circular motion with her hand in front of her mouth or beside her ear, head cocked to one side, to indicate that each child is expected to respond by repeating what Teacher models in French (bonjour madame L.). Gradually, as she continues around the circle, the teacher only prompts when necessary.

The "bonjour" ritual is quickly followed by the "calendar" ritual, with the children counting the days in unison as Teacher points to the numbers and leads the chorus (gradually, the children do it without any verbal cues). Next, Teacher looks out the window and asks, "Quel temps fait-il aujourd'hui?" (What is the weather today?) immediately cueing a song about the weather and then having the children move a hand on a weather clock to an appropriate image (windy, cloudy, sunny, etc.) to indicate the weather. And so the rituals succeed each other, their familiar sequence helping the children anticipate what

comes next, and key gestures, words, and melodies acting as clues or meaning markers which help the children attribute appropriate meaning to the situation.

Each situation seems to have what could be called its meaning stucture or potential for meaning. There are only so many semantic options in any situation, and in the classroom, the situation is often carefully orchestrated so that the range of potential meanings is very small.

THE NATURE OF CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION

The teacher-initiated rituals of the kindergarten classroom pervasively structured the children's experience and expectations. Especially at the beginning of the year, the children's main focus was not on learning French *per se* , but rather on understanding what is expected of them and what they can in turn expect. Although the fact that the teacher is speaking a language that the children cannot understand would seem a priori to be a major source of frustration and difficulty, contrary to our expectations, the second language element seemed to play only a minor, albeit significant, role in classroom communication. The video recordings clearly show that the children are able to constuct much meaning from the immersion situation even at the beginning of the year. Meaning in the classroom did not seem to reside in words as much as in context and in the paralanguage elements of communication.

Meaning in the immersion classroom is situationally-embedded and words are very much words-as-acts (Edwards and Furlong, 1978).

What becomes important in considering the nature of classroom communication in the immersion classroom is the interaction between the participants. Preliminary analysis and intepretation of the data indicate that meaning is continually being interpreted and negotiated within the social context of the classroom (with the teacher, between small groups of children and among the larger group). The teacher does not ask the children to say everything in French. She is quite willing to have the children initiate conversation and make comments in English. The teacher reacts to what the child says by responding in French. It would appear that children do not need to understand every word spoken by the teacher. There is a "scaffolding of meaning" (Bruner, 1975) that is constructed around the language situation, drawing on contextual clues (e.g. gestures, body movement, intonation, routines and rituals). Children appear to have a tolerance for ambiguity which allows them to draw on the total context for their clues to meaning rather than relying solely on the linguistic information that is provided. As we discuss elsewhere (Weber and Tardif, 1987), the teacher and students develop a varied repertoire of sense-making strategies that help them overcome the obstacles provided by the second language context.

II. THE CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW

The emerging picture of the child's point of view stems from two different methodological procedures: inferences based on careful observation of what the children do and say and how they look, and asking them (directly and indirectly) to describe their experience in French immersion kindergarten.

WHAT FRENCH AND LEARNING FRENCH MEANS TO CHILDREN

Using a frightened and shy three-year old puppet as co-interviewer, we interviewed the children near the beginning and again near the end of the school year. The children were asked about their feelings towards immersion kindergarten and learning French. We asked them how it felt not to understand the teacher, if it bothered them. An overwhelming majority of the children were very nonchalant about their inablity to understand the teacher, saying things like "I just listen and then my brain figures it out" or "I just ask if I need something". It was clear to the children that they were allowed to speak English to the teacher and that although teacher spoke only French, she somehow also understood them. They felt no sense of social shame at not understanding and little shyness in asking for help. Most of them seemed confident that they were learning French. This easygoing, natural attitude expressed by so many young children might be an argument in favor of early

rather than delayed entry into immersion programs.

The following excerpts from interviews conducted at the beginning of the school year provide some understanding of how children view the kindergarten experience generally and how they describe what it means to learn French. Children were well able to recognize that they were in a French immersion kindergarten but that not all kindergartens were necessarily French. There was a realization that a conscious choice had been made to place them in a French immersion kindergarten in order to learn French. The experience of learning French is very much associated with the teacher. It is the language that Teacher speaks and that they will learn by listening, by having Teacher talking and saying things:

Interviewer:	(Holding puppet) Where am I?
Child 1:	You're in our school.
Puppet:	What's a school?
Child 2:	School is a big place.
Puppet:	A big place! It sounds scary.
Child 2:	No, it's not.
Puppet:	Isn't it scary?
Child 1 & 2:	No
Puppet:	What do you do in school?
Child 1:	We play and work.
Puppet:	What kind of work do you do in school?
Child 2:	Well, we colour and we paint?
Puppet:	Oh! Is this grade five?
Child 2:	No. Kindergarten.
Puppet:	Kinder ...?
Child 2:	Kindergarten is a place.
Puppet:	What's kindergarten?
Child 1:	Kindergarten is a place where you play.
Puppet:	A place where you play! Oh! But, but, I'm afraid. I don't understand the teacher.
Child 1:	Well, we can teach you.
Puppet:	Teach me what?
Child 1:	French

Puppet: French? What's French?
Child 3: A different language than this (points to his body)
Puppet: Are we speaking French?
Child 3: English
Puppet: What's French?
Child 4: It's the same thing, only you talk different.
Child 5: French is words
Puppet: New words?
Child 5: Yeh, things you already know but you can say in French.
Child 1: French is a language.
Puppet? A language? What's a language?
Child 2: Some kind of talking.
Puppet: Talking, oh! Well, I can talk. Am I speaking French?
Can you speak French?
Child 1: Yes.
Puppet. How come I can't speak French if you can?
Child 1: We can't too. Teacher can.
Puppet: Teach me some.
Child 1: O.K. Jaune-yellow, rouge-red.
Puppet: Oh! How did you learn that? You're smart! How did you learn those words?
Child 1: From the teacher.
Puppet? The teacher! Oh! What do teachers do?
Child 2: They say ....things.

Not only were the children easily able to distinguish French from English, they had some ideas about how they learned French and how they came to undertand the teacher.

Puppet: Can you understand the teacher?
Child 1: Yeh
Puppet: How do you understand?
Child 1: You just think in your head what it means.
Puppet: What do you mean?
Child 1: Think in your head what it sounds like.
Puppet (turning to child 2): How do you understand?
Child 2: Teacher shows us what she is talking about.
Child 3: I just think very hard what word it is like in English.

Children appear to take a lot of personal credit in the learning of French. They attribute a very active role to themselves in the second language learning process.

The children also accord a major role to adults. In the interviews, they commonly referred to the teacher as the primary reason for their learning French. As well, the children often referred to the important role of their parents in the fact that they were attending French immersion kindergarten. "Well, our parents want us to learn French!" It is interesting to note the children's reactions to their parents lack of knowledge of French. The children express delight in knowing something that their parents do.not know. To the question, by the interviewer (puppet): "How come you want to know French?", the children often commented "We want to 'learn' our mommy and daddy."

As another indicator of the children's attitudes towards immersion kindergarten, near the end of the year we asked the children two questions: Do you want to go to French grade one or to English grade one next year? (Why or why not?) and When you are a Mummy or Daddy, will you send your little girl/boy (child of same sex) to French immersion kindergarten? (Why or why not?). Their responses, almost without exception, were a very definite affirmative. One little girl hesitated, saying that she wanted her daughter to go to immersion, but to Chinese rather than French immersion, indicative of the open attitude to second language learning that seemed prevalent among the children, an attitude that reflected the views of their parents

expressed during the parent interviews.

WHAT THE KINDERGARTEN IMMERSION EXPERIENCE MEANS TO CHILDREN

Analysis of the interview data suggests that to the children, French immersion kindergarten means: a place where we play and have fun (the most popular response), a place where we learn things, and a place where we learn French. They say things like, "It's fun", "You play and you learn", "You can play with Lego", "We make things","You have to do what Teacher tells you to do, and you have to do your work".

As one would expect in any kindergarten, the children were rather subdued and shy the first week of school in comparison with the second and subsequent weeks. During circle time, for example, they carefully focused all their attention on the teacher, their eyes almost popping out in intent concentration, carefully imitating teacher's gestures or copying what other children were doing. The contrast in the following excerpts from our observation notes show how as the weeks progress and the children become more familiar with the songs and routines, the way they participate in circle time gradually changes:

> <u>1st week:</u> It is ironic: the children are walking around the circle with serious, almost worried looks on most of their faces, looking at the teacher or at the ground, moving their mouths a bit and singing without apparent conviction a new song "à l'école, on s'amuse" (translation: at school we have fun). Others are not singing at all but are doing the

required actions. The contrast between their expression and the meaning of the song is striking.

2nd week: The children are all singing the song and smiling. For the first time (during my observations of this song), they really seem to be enjoying the song. They seem more at ease and confident. Their expressions match the meaning of the song.

CONCLUSIONS

There has been concern expressed by some educators (e.g. Tough, 1977; Orton, 1984) that begining an immersion program at the kindergarten level may cause undue cognitive and emotional difficulty for children. The research to date has not adequately addressed this issue nor has it provided a general understanding of how the young child actually reacts and adapts to the second language kindergarten experience.

The second language proved to be much less of a barrier than we had anticipated. During the first days of school, we carefully observed the children with some of these concerns in mind, half expecting tears and visible discomfort as signs of the stress of beginning immersion. We were very surprised at just how easily the chidren adapted to the situation -with very few tears, very little fuss, and with lots of smiles and enthusiasm despite an obvious initial shyness in some of the children. In fact, it is the parents and the teachers rather than the children who seem to be the most challenged. The fact that not understanding the teacher seemed to be only a minor

nuisance to the children may be indicative of the fact that children are more tolerant of ambiguity than are adults. Even in their first language, young children are used to not understanding everything adults say. They do not feel as socially awkward about not understanding as adults might in a similar situation, nor are they as shy about asking for help. Not knowing everything and asking lots of questions are part of the socially-accepted role of being a child.

The study highlights the nature of communication within a second language classroom setting. Our findings indicate that the meaning of the immersion kindergarten experience is dependent on how the participants define the situation. The child comes to understand the situation by attending not only to the linguistic cues which are provided by the teacher but also by interpreting the paralanguage cues, the routines and rituals of school culture, of childhood culture and of the second language context.

Current analysis of the data is centered on identifying and describing more precisely classroom interaction, and second language acquisition processes. We are quantifying some of the data, examining such dimensions as language functions and interaction patterns. As our work progresses, we see its potential for revealing new insights into the important role of the nonverbal features of classroom life in all situations of classroom communication. Although our initial focus was the second language context, we could not help noticing how a second

language context throws into startling reflief the functions and the pervasiveness of classroom ritual and culture, as well as the importance of the paralanguage aspects of classroom interaction. We are carefully documenting and describing these processes. Although there is much research dealing with the outcomes of French immersion education, there has been very little in-depth research on second language acquisition processes within the classroom context and very little research on interaction processes in French immersion classrooms.

NOTES

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